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## **THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT**



THE BOURNVILLE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

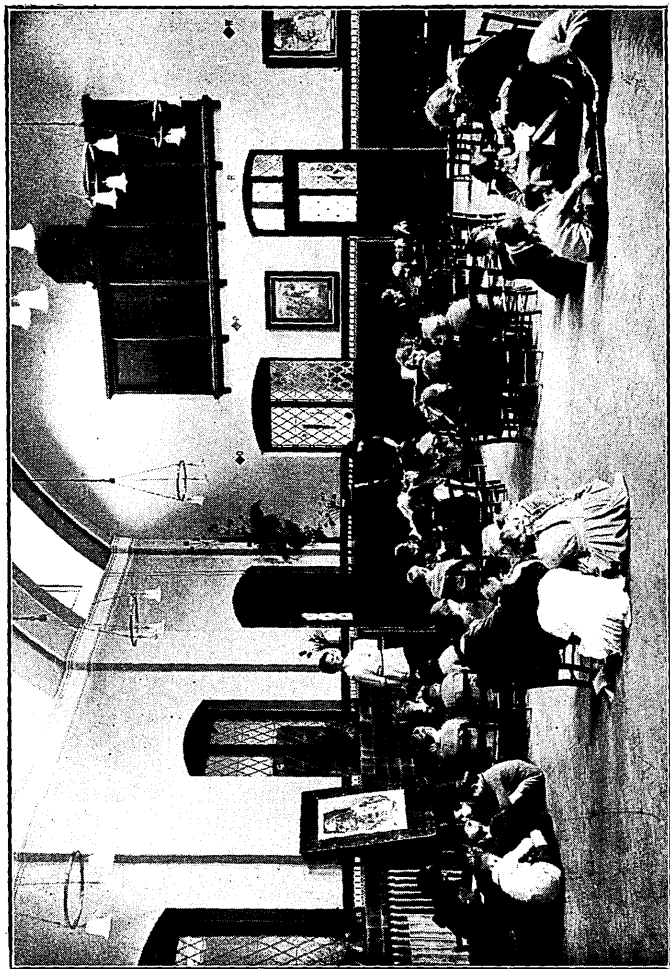
# The Primary Department

Its Principles and Methods

By  
Ethel Archibald Johnston  
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*[New and revised edition.]*

London  
NATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION  
57 · 59, Ludgate Hill, E.C. 4



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SCOPE OF THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

**From the Point of View of the School.**

**I**N the early days of the graded movement in the Sunday School, the Primary Department was frankly considered by the workers of the new system to be the hub around which all things revolved. This was so for more than one reason. At the back of all, of course, lay the growing consideration for the tender and important years of childhood, and the consequent urgent demand that the "infant class" should be given better things and given them first. But what made the Primary Department such an important asset for the Sunday School, indeed for the Church, were the possibilities that lay in it for the training of teachers. That supreme piece of expression work, the teaching of the immature,

was given a new stimulus, and was set upon a broader basis from the day when the first young teachers of fifteen or sixteen years of age took their small classes in England's first Primary Department in Toxteth Congregational Sunday School, Liverpool. At the time the need for teachers was insistent in every part of the land, and Primary Departments began the solution of that problem.

Many developments have come about since those days. The youngest children who attend Sunday School now meet under the name of Beginners, in rooms quite separate from the rest, under the care of some of our wisest and best trained teachers. We recognize that these Beginners' years offer opportunities for laying the foundations of self-disciplined character which will never present themselves again, and we want to make the most of them. From the point of view of great beginnings this Department is vital to the Church.

Above Primary age we now find the scholars carefully divided into group grades as clearly defined as the Beginners' and Primary Departments, each with its smaller class groups, specialised lesson course, and its own particularly suitable service. Each grade, too, by virtue of these smaller groups, has its staff

of young people who, since starting their career as helpers in the Primary Department, have taken teacher training seriously, and as a consequence are not only becoming efficient class teachers, but in many cases are developing the powers of capable leadership. So that the time is here when we must reckon at least six or seven divisions or Departments in the Sunday School, each one complete in itself and an important link in the chain of the years. In other words, the completely graded Sunday School or as some like to term it, the graded Junior Church, has arrived.

If we can no longer count the Primary Department to be the hub of the school we may, however, still think of it as its keystone. Because of the peculiar suitability of the age of the children we still feel it to be the place where our young people should start their career as responsible teachers. They may watch and help a little with the Beginners but they cannot be responsible here, for they are neither wise enough to meet the Beginner's emergency nor self-controlled enough to leave him alone. And a class of Junior age children as a first proposition has frightened away altogether many an adolescent who would have thoroughly enjoyed teaching under conditions

more possible to him. A good many years of experience have shown us that if we are to be sure of securing any large number of teachers and if we would train them satisfactorily we must ask for them not much later than fifteen. Here, in the Primary Department it seems to them a comparatively easy and very desirable thing to undertake three or four children who are still young, reasonably suggestible and very lovable. A class of three or four Primary children has been the salvation of many a big boy and girl. The Primary Department training class thus becomes the crux of the situation in this matter of teacher producing. So that the Primary Department still has its very special contribution to make to the graded Sunday School.

#### **From the Point of View of the Child.**

From the point of view of the scholars more especially, the opportunity of the Primary Department is that presented by the years usually reckoned to be the culmination of childhood, six to eight and a half or nine. The little person who passes up from Beginners at six is still very much of a child, but the one who passes through to the Junior at eight or nine is very much of a boy or girl. We may



draw no artificial dividing-line between the children of the Primary and Beginners' Department, but when we come to contrast the children of four and five with those of eight years of age, we soon recognise that wonderful changes take place during these years, physically, mentally and spiritually. The body increases in height about three inches a year, and in weight about five pounds a year. The child becomes differently proportioned; he has greater physical control.

At eight years the child is still full of activity, though this is now more under the control of his will. "God's finger is on the dynamo of the life and as long as the wheels of life go round activity cannot cease to generate."

A great development in the power of concentration takes place during the years between six and nine. Whereas the Beginner thinks in "bits and fragments" and the stories we give him must be short and the plots uncomplicated, at the end of Primary Department age the child can listen to a story (if it is interesting to him) which takes twenty minutes or more to tell. He is able to sit quietly for a considerable period without being a disturber of the peace. In this connection, however, we must

remember that it is by doing rather than by listening that all folk most surely learn.

As the child grows the herd instinct develops ever more strongly. While more independent, because more experienced and therefore more self-reliant than the Beginner, he is yet in some ways more suggestible. He is, at least, more affected by the opinion of his contemporaries and of adults and inclines to travel with the crowd. It is most important for the Primary leader to think out both the values and the dangers of this characteristic to the individual Primary child.

He is now a member of a considerably large social group. While the home is still very much the centre of his life he is now also a school child and has made his entrance to the great world of teachers and books. He is sorting out and pigeon-holing experiences rapidly and can make fairly big generalisations and deductions.

The Primary child's literary interest is still largely a matter of folklore and animal-lore narrative, but there is also considerable awakening to interest in what *actually* happened once upon a time. Although strong history interest does not develop until the Junior period, yet many of the personalities of

history are becoming very attractive to him and there is also a strong liking for the moral story. Dr. Dawson points out to us, however, in his studies in "Children's Interest in the Bible" that children of this age accept more readily "the simple story whose moral force is felt and appreciated" than the story where the moral is obvious and obtrusive.

With the acquisition of ideas and the strengthening of memory imagination is now becoming the means of creating ideals. New hopes and emotions are being stirred. Through living in the lives of other personalities many sides of character may be strengthened and purified. The world of imaginative play is the heritage of the Primary child as well as of the Beginner, and if we are wise we shall give him even on Sunday opportunities to learn some of life's greatest lessons through it. The hero he has been, the action he has done, though perhaps only in play, is the hero or action that will truly become a part of his life.

A child's natural religion is a very beautiful and a very simple thing. Its great characteristic is faith; unquestioning acceptance of what we tell him. The religious feeling is in part the outcome of his dependence upon others. God to him is a real person, some one

to whom he can look for protection and for the supply of his wants, as to his father. He is great and mighty, usually like a man but glorified.

One child says, "God is a great being with a crown upon His head, seated upon a throne." And another, "His face is bright and shining." The little Beginner thinks it perfectly natural to draw pictures of God. The Primary child sometimes begins to wonder a little whether this is right. Heaven he thinks of as a beautiful place, God's home; very often it is above the clouds and stars. Some children think of it as a city with streets and magnificent buildings. Some as a beautiful garden with wondrous trees, where children play. The soul, too, is thought of as a definite thing. "My idea of the soul was that of a tiny, frail, white bird," says one person. Another, "My soul was the picture of a beautiful fairy."

One thing that we seldom have to teach children is that the soul is immortal. Can we not remember how as children we found it difficult to think of the beginning of all things? Back and back we went in thought, but it seemed impossible to imagine the time when there was *nothing*. It is equally difficult for a child to think of an ending of all things.

Indeed, as some one has remarked, it seems as if man has to learn his mortality rather than his immortality. The child has no suspicion that his own existence will ever cease. Dr. Dawson says, "God is immanent in the human soul, and God is eternal. The child instinctively feels the value of a life that shares the nature of its Creator."

As those responsible for the religious nurture of the Primary child we must not do violence to these natural tendencies. Having in mind his increasing capacities we must see to it that the Primary Department lesson, worship and expressional activities will help to foster in him confidence in and devotion to God, and the spirit of good will towards those about him; the spirit that was in Christ Jesus as a boy.

One thing, however, is imperative, we must beware of forcing prematurely the moral virtues that belong to the boy or girl of maturer age. To expect from a seven-year-old a keen sense of justice or intense loyalty to his play-mate is sheer folly. In the aims for the Primary section of the British Graded Lesson Courses we find the principle stated that for this age we shall do wisely to choose only such stories as will convey thoughts of God, of Jesus

or of goodness which the child can grasp *at his present stage* of development; that we must avoid such stories as might convey false or confusing impressions. There are whole historical periods and groups of incidents in the Bible story which because of his undeveloped time sense and his still limited life experience he is unquestionably unable to cope with. Such virtues as happiness, self-control, reverence for God and man, courtesy, helpfulness, consideration for animals, truthfulness, the power to make wise and right choices, are among those which we shall find it well to stress more than some others.

It has been said—"The great duty of the teacher is to cultivate the tender soil, to keep removed as far as possible the weeds of error, to strengthen good habits and check bad ones, to dwell ever on doing good, on acting lovingly and rightly; to show that mere words are nothing without deeds. To train children in practical goodness, and to keep open the way to God—this is to nurture true religion, this is to get ready for what surely is coming."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT STAFF.

**T**HE staff of the Primary Department usually consists of the following: Leader; Deputy Leader; Secretary-Treasurer; Pianist; teachers; helpers or deputy teachers; Cradle Department Organiser.

#### *The Leader.*

Upon the leader, of course, must depend the success of the whole Primary Department and Training Class organisation. She is manager, organiser, teacher and above all else a guardian. To her falls the task of grading and dividing the classes, of assigning them to different teachers, and of arranging occupation for the helpers. She sees to the promoting or transferring of scholars, sends out letters of invitation or welcome to new ones. An important part of her work is to visit the homes of

her scholars and to get into close touch with the parents of her children. A great deal of her work is accomplished before Sunday arrives.

She is also the leader of the Department Training Class. One night a week she meets the teachers for Bible or other study and lesson preparation. Before the class leaves her she must feel satisfied that every teacher will go to the children on Sunday with the lesson intelligently prepared. When the Sunday hour comes, she knows that, except in case of emergency, there will be a teacher for every class, and that the pianist will be in her place. When the teachers arrive they will find her waiting there to greet them. It is, of course, the leader's part to guide the Department in all the activities. She leads during the time of united worship, usually teaches the hymns, asks for news, often gives the Nature Talk, regulates the time for class teaching. Her finger is constantly on the pulse of the Department, though she will often give the floor to the class teachers and to the children themselves. She is the central influence in the environment and her spirit is bound to determine the spirit of the Department. Her greatest task is perhaps to sense how far she may use her influence without interfering with



the individual worship and the self-realisation of her scholars and teachers. Happy is the Department whose leader finds it possible to be more mother and guardian than superintendent and director.

### **The Deputy Leader.**

The one who holds this post is practically in training for the position of leader. She aids the leader in the discharge of her many duties, and looks after visitors. If at any time the leader is unable to be present, the deputy is there to fill her place and carry on both school and training class as usual. Amongst her more important tasks on Sunday she may count the guardianship of the cloak-room or lobby when teachers and children meet together before the session. That ten minutes or quarter of an hour may easily determine whether the service of the day will be a reverent or a restless one. While teachers and children are arriving and finding their classes preparatory to entering the Department room her influence through courteous greeting and tactful suggestion is extremely important. In some Primary Departments this work falls to the lot of a rather young secretary, with disastrous consequences.

### The Secretary-Treasurer.

Unless the Secretary-Treasurer is needed for any reason to take the cloakroom duties just suggested as the work of the Deputy Leader this staff member may well be a young man or woman, about the same age as the Primary teachers, who perhaps is unable to spare a week evening for training class. The actual secretarial work is not very arduous and the two duties of secretary and treasurer can easily be combined. His work is, of course, to keep a record of the attendance by means of some system which will never cause the least disturbance in the Primary room. He takes charge of collections, notices, tickets, etc., and makes all necessary reports.

Should the Secretary-Treasurer not be able to attend the weekly Training Class he must depute someone to record attendance there. Much of his Sunday work, such as distributing attendance cards, notices or papers, is done *in the lobby before and after the session*, while the teachers are engaged in receiving and dismissing the children.

He never disturbs a class at work, but during the session he takes his post quietly at the table near the door and acts the part of protector to the Department.

### **The Pianist.**

The pianist of the Primary Department must be one who can work very closely in touch with the leader. During the Sunday hour she must be almost the leader's second self. One who is passably skilled at the piano and possessed of a truly sympathetic temperament will make a much better Primary pianist than one who has great technical ability and yet lacks intuition as to what children and leader require at any given moment of the service.

The pianist cannot well have other duties during the service hour. She is playing the piano when the children enter the room and often during the service; not only for hymns, but also for numerous signals and other incidental music. She often plays a quiet melody while the children come to the front and gather around the leader for a nature talk, or while the classes are grouping for story time; while expression time is being prepared for; sometimes when a story is dramatised.

Music, it is necessary to point out, may be needed at any moment just in the same way as a word from the leader may be needed. The pianist should occasionally attend the training class, and she should always know a few Sundays ahead what themes are likely to

be centres of thought for the Department services.

### **The Teachers.**

These are, as we have seen, the youths and girls usually between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, who are receiving their first experience as responsible class teachers under the direction of the leader. They attend the week-evening training class regularly. Their youth makes it imperative that no teachers who have been absent from the training class shall be allowed to teach on Sunday. They meet the children in the lobby, and chat with them until it is time to fall into order for entering the Primary room. If the system of recording attendance demands it they mark the cards or books given them in the lobby by the secretary. They sit with them during the service of worship and are responsible either for the lesson story of the day, or the nature talk, or for both. In some Departments the leader prefers to give the nature talk herself for the reason that nature teaching is usually more difficult than story-telling. The teachers usually guide the children in starting expressional activities after the story or talk. The leader, however, may prefer to do this on cer-

tain occasions, for example, if a story is to be dramatised. When school is over the teachers wait while the children don their wraps, and speed them on their way home.

One responsibility is to visit and find out the reason when any of their own scholars have been absent. If a child has been absent for three or four Sundays, the teachers receive from the secretary a card printed somewhat as follows :—

Name.....

Address.....

has been absent for ..... Sundays.

Please visit, find out reasons for absence, and report to the leader at next Training Class.

To visit for such a purpose is not an unacceptable task to an adolescent youth or girl. An errand of this kind will break the ice of social formality and give the young teacher a very natural introduction to the parents and homes of the children in his or her class.

### **The Helpers or Deputy Teachers.**

When the boys and girls of 14 or 15 years first express their desire to become teachers it is found wise to give them at least a short

period of probation during which they can look about them and realise what teaching means. They are therefore for the first six months or so considered as helpers or deputy teachers. On some Sundays they act as deputies in the Primary Department classes, while on others they watch the work done by experienced teachers in the Beginners' Department, sometimes making themselves useful there, but of course not teaching. Here, however, they pick up many hints for the future. On other Sundays still they are permitted to watch one or another of the various Departments of the Sunday School that they may thoroughly understand what they are committing themselves to in starting upon their career as teachers. In this way they are gradually initiated into the work of teaching. During all this time they attend regularly the Training Class for the Primary teachers.

### **The Cradle Department Organiser.**

The Cradle Department, as every one knows, consists of little ones who are too young to attend the Sunday session, but who are regarded as members of the school from the time their names are placed upon the Cradle Roll which hangs upon the walls of the Primary and

Beginners' Department rooms. So this member of the staff really belongs both to the Beginners' and to Primary Departments.

The work of the Cradle Roll Organiser is done principally during the week, among any homes where there are children too young to attend Sunday School. Her duty is to call upon the parents who attend the Church and upon any others in the district who do not attend any place of worship, and extend a cordial invitation for any baby or babies therein to become members of the Cradle Department of the Sunday School. If a parent accepts this invitation, the Cradle Department organiser writes the baby's name on an enrolment certificate and this is sent to the home. On the following Sunday the baby's name is brought to both Primary and Beginners' Departments and an opportunity is taken during the service of placing it upon the Cradle Roll.

From time to time as the birthdays come around, the Cradle Department organiser takes a picture, or some other little remembrance to the baby at home.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE SUNDAY HOUR.

**T**HIS is the era both in the day school and the Sunday School of attention to the individual and of work in groups. The organisation of the graded Sunday School is rooted and grown in the habit of small classes. From the first, in well organised Primary Departments each class was limited to three or at the most four scholars; as far as possible those in about the same stage of mental development were grouped together. This was found especially necessary because of the youth of the teachers. This small group grading very soon, through the sympathy and understanding that was engendered between teacher and child, made apparent the fact that each child is an individual with his



own way of approach to the matter in hand and therefore in need of more scope for development than we had hitherto given him. This realisation gradually brought about much better material conditions in Primary Department environment. So that to-day Primary Leaders are feeling that a room, in area equal to thirty-five feet square, is none too large for a Department numbering forty children.

This room, in which the children meet for their service, as well as being commodious needs to be comfortable and beautiful. Generally speaking it is harder for a child to be naughty in a clean, bright attractive place; the suggestion about him is all towards that which is good. Where there is no irritant, where the child feels that all around him is beautiful and at peace, he is far less likely to be peevish or perverse. "Beauty," says some one, "cannot create a new heart, but it can greatly change the disposition."

Paterson Dubois says—"We often speak of the effects of living in a musical, literary, scientific, or other intellectual or affective atmosphere. It is our indirect training which we feel to be not only congenial but essential; yet we seldom realise its potency as a method of child-training." Children unconsciously

absorb the bad or the good. It would be difficult to estimate the value to the child of good surroundings in his early years.

The room, therefore, should be bright and well ventilated, and if possible should have a noiseless block floor. Where this is not possible, the floor should be covered with linoleum or sound-reducing material of some suitable sort.

The colour scheme of a room is a most important consideration. When planning the colouring of the walls the amount of light a room gets needs especially to be considered; also the effect that is desirable as a background for pictures. It should not be forgotten that all Primary rooms need arrangements which will permit pictures to be hung low. The Primary child's line of vision is not by any means that of an adult. A few really beautiful pictures, inspiring to the Primary years may be permanently on the walls; pictures of beautiful things in nature, or of scenes which silently tell stories of noble deeds and tender emotions. It is well to have at least some of these in colour; but the colouring must be good. We want to cultivate from the earliest years a love for all that is beautiful and harmonious, and to this end to give the most perfect impressions

that good taste can provide. It is well also to have one or two frames with movable backs, so that lesson or other pictures may be changed in these from time to time.

It is exceedingly difficult to get an atmosphere of reverence and devotion in a room where children are allowed to talk and play before the beginning of the session. Such a room cannot be turned instantly into a place of worship. Leaders who wish the children to feel this are careful to reserve the Departmental room until the time for the school to begin. The children assemble somewhere outside in a cloak-room or lobby. It is most desirable that both children and teachers should remove cloaks and hats before the school session. In this way much physical inconvenience and one great cause of distraction and restlessness are done away with.

Small chairs to harmonise or contrast suitably with the colour scheme of the room are the recognised seating accommodation for Primary children. It is as easy to buy these in three different heights as in one measurement, and much more comfortable for the children. The feet of each child should rest upon the floor while he sits well back in the chair. Town and country children of the same age

may differ in height to the extent of a couple of inches. Chairs with arms are found to be most unsuitable. The teachers' chairs need to be of the same height as those of the children in their classes.

Until the day shall come, and we hope it is not far distant, when our Church buildings are built on purpose to accommodate grading, a good many Primary Departments must meet in premises filled with adult furniture. In such cases it is very often possible to clear one portion of the room completely and through a moderate expenditure on curtain material to hide the undesirable furniture so that the remaining space will contain the requisites of the Primary Department alone.

There should be no platform of any sort in the Primary Department room.

It is of great advantage to have a number of small light tables, some for holding expression materials and others to be used from time to time for the convenience of individual children for expression work.

Other furniture needed for the room includes a good piano; a roomy cupboard to hold expression and other materials; a small table for the leader's use and one for the Secretary. A leader's blackboard will doubtless be re-

quired from time to time, though it probably will not be used every Sunday. There should be a good supply of flower vases, the form and shape of which will enhance and not detract from the beauty of the flowers, branches and so forth, which they are destined to hold.

In addition to the actual furniture of the room there will be needed requisites for registering attendance, a Cradle Roll and its accessories and materials for the children's expression.

The following is a suitable list of expression materials which the children are likely to require from time to time. Additions to this list will need to be made occasionally :—

White, rough paper, suitable for drawing purposes, cut into sheets about 10 by 8 inches.

Sheets of brown paper of a similar size, or slightly larger.

Black-lead pencils and assorted coloured crayons sufficient for each child.

Children's scissors.

Hard millboards, each about 15 by 12 inches, and not less than one-eighth of an inch thick (to be used as drawing boards).

Individual sand-trays, each at least 12 by 10 inches.

Enough moulder's brown and red sand to

fill the trays. This sand must be unused and *sifted*. It can be obtained at a foundry.

Blocks (kindergarten gift-blocks) for building.

Also a large number of tiny blocks and various other materials for use in connection with the individual sand tray work; such as stones, match sticks (used matches with heads cut off will serve), twigs and other small greenery (kept in water), a few packets of coloured paper, etc., etc.

White and coloured chalks.

Sufficient dusters for each child.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FREEDOM IN WORSHIP.

**D**URING these years of the growth of the Graded Sunday School we have had our theories as to the best ways of worship for the scholars of the various grades. But from time to time, perhaps because of some difficulty of discipline or some lack of ready response from the scholars, there has come to every thoroughly keen leader the question, "Are we really securing for these children the best means of approach to God?" And we have set ourselves to work out some possible new plan or some variation of programme to make better opportunity. Every once in a while came a clear lead from the children themselves, or from the teachers, and we tested the value of that. Our endeavours led us further on than we were before, but we were never perhaps quite satisfied or sure. It was really a com-

plete change of point of view we needed. After all who are we that we should say how young folk should worship? We are adults. True, we were children and adolescents once, but most of us were brought up according to the religious usages of our elders and did not half realise what we wanted ourselves in the matter of religious nurture. Being mature now we have a right to theories perhaps, but we have only the right to try them out on our young folk if we have first honestly striven to find out what the *fundamental need* of the child and youth is; to get back right behind ideas absorbed from books and lectures and traditions, to the individual *Self* that is the possession of each human member of God's creation.

While we were working out these problems from the adult point of view there came the clear challenge of Montessori and her school. "Think again, workers with youth. Have you ever *really* given the child a chance to go his *own* way so that you might find out what exactly is his lead?" This stabbed our imagination. Was it a fact that we had never really seen things from the other side? What would happen in our Primary Departments if we ventured to stop arranging our order of worship? What would become of our cherished atmos-



phere and the careful correlation of thought in the service? What would become of the work of the young teachers? Surely the answers to these questions would spell disaster to the work. But they did not. We thought again with minds alive to the possibilities of the venture of freedom. After all perhaps we should at least give the children a chance to show whether our choice of activities was their choice! Had we been in the habit of waiting until the child really was grateful for something before we asked him to tell God that he was so? Why should not the children's prayers be their very own? Why should they not choose from among the hymns that they know the ones which they consider most beautiful and appropriate to the moment? It is our fault if the repertoire they have to choose from is unsuitable.

Why should an individual child not be allowed to ask for an old story over again instead of, or as well as, a new one? Or even to choose between a nature talk and a story? It is conceivable that sometimes he might not need both and would do better to be concerned with only one group of mental images for his expression. Again, why should he not use the medium of expression which he believes to be

the best? Experience would soon teach him if his choice were unwise.

What if he did want story time earlier in the hour than has been customary? This would almost surely be one of his first requests if we allowed him to arrange proceedings. Would this not help in the more natural correlation of the thoughts of the hour? Would the "atmosphere" necessarily be spoilt if everything did not proceed as arranged beforehand? Perhaps our ideas about atmosphere have been rather one-sided and what we have taken to be reverence was merely an artificial thing. The child's spontaneous expression of joy and love must surely be more acceptable to God than the offering of thanks which is the result of suggestion from another, and that other an adult.

And what about the young teachers? Is not true child study only possible under the most natural conditions? Would not the need for teachers be greater than ever in a more spontaneous hour? A mother in a home would need a good many elder boys and girls to help her with the little ones if she had a family of thirty or forty.

The child belongs to and will have to live in a world made up of many people. Surely

during our Sunday opportunities we must take our share in preparing him to live in it as an efficient member of the big group. To let him take his own line and feel his freedom does not necessarily imply a Department without discipline. It could, of course, imply license and disaster. But the leader who thinks out carefully what liberty really is will soon see that the child is only truly free when voluntarily obeying the laws that makes social life possible. The Primary child is old enough to understand a good deal of this, and the leader has every right, indeed it should become her greatest privilege, to point out to him the fact that only those who consider each other can live happily together. She will take various means of doing this. The fact that the children are allowed to move about more freely does not mean that the atmosphere of good will, gentle speech and courteous manners must be absent. Music will still have a big share in helping the spirit of the hour to be peaceful and joyous, and the chat for planning together how to arrange things efficiently and beautifully will take an important place in her method.

What an infinitely better basis for training in self-control and the power to make right and wise choices we have under such conditions

than if we order things so that the child cannot get "out of hand"! The Sunday hour in the Primary Department must have for its objective at least these two things if it is to serve the child faithfully. It must provide opportunity for the practice of active righteousness and it must foster the development of the child's own natural expression in worship.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SUNDAY HOUR.

**B**ECAUSE the leader need not come to the children's hour on Sunday with the order of proceedings unalterably arranged it does not follow that she and her staff have little preparation to make. The subject material for the children is as much a concern as ever, possibly more so. Although it is most desirable to have a lesson course arranged for the whole year, indeed for the whole three years of Primary Department life,\* yet probably no list of lessons can be followed exactly if we are to be faithful to the children's lead. But a story or a nature talk or both must be chosen and prepared each week, except upon those occasions when it is decided that the children need the whole hour for expressional activities. It may be thought

\* See The British Graded Lesson Courses: Primary Section.

wise for all teachers to be prepared with both Bible and nature material or it may be best to have certain ones prepared with the nature talk and certain others with the story. Some leaders will prefer to keep the nature teaching entirely in their own hands.

Preparation will also include refreshing the mind concerning past stories in case these are asked for over again.

Under the head of subject material will come any new or old hymns that may help in expressing the theme of the day or put into beautiful form thoughts conceived in the experiences of other Sunday hours. It will include, too, readings of one kind and another. The right choice of poetry or prose for the Primary child's hymns and readings is one of the leader's big responsibilities, for through these she is helping to form the literary taste not only of the children but also of the teachers. Many of our children's hymn books are a mixture of good and very indifferent material, and a careful way has to be steered between what is worth while and what is not.

The story or nature talk will usually suggest the centre of thought for the day. If there is a close connection in thought between the two, the correlation of the whole or at least

a considerable part of the service will become a natural matter, but it is of real importance that the leader and teachers should view beforehand the possibilities of this natural correlation so that opportunities will not be missed to make of the service a united whole.

Music also will come under the head of subject material, and here again the most careful choice must be made if the best results are to follow. Other than through the personality of the leader and teachers there is no surer way of touching the child's soul with reverence than through music. The something which was "not quite right" in the previous Sunday service may have been due to the wrong choice of music. Thanks to the children's musicians and to the old masters there is abundance of good material from which the leader and pianist can choose. They need marches, airs which suggest joyous activity, serious work or quiet thought, even to the silence which makes ready for the atmosphere of a prayer. They need illustrative music for the nature talks and stories. Schumann, Mendelssohn, Handel, Gurlitt, Scarlatti—these and many more may be drawn upon again and again.

Lastly the leaders and teachers need to have ready beforehand any pictures and nature

specimens with which it may be wise to amplify stories, talks and activities.

Beyond having the subject material well in hand, the readiness of the leader and her staff is largely a matter of keeping open mind and heart to sense what the children are especially in need of at the moment.

Let us now look at the possibilities of the actual children's hour. Children and teachers having met and formed their own class groups in the lobby, enter the Primary room to suitable music and seat themselves in the small class circles which have been made ready beforehand. When all are seated and the music ceases they exchange greetings with the leader and with one another.

Now if strong wishes are expressed in favour of beginning with a singing or prayer time the children are given opportunity to suggest hymns or the thing they may wish to speak to God about. The hymns chosen may be decided by majority vote, or one or more individuals may make a special request.

News time or "planning time" if not the first thing, is usually next on the programme, for it is most necessary that this causerie should occur near the beginning of the hour, since the further activities will largely depend upon it.



Now the children tell or show any individual news they have brought. Birthday news will be included. Concerns common to all, such as a gift of flowers for the service hour, a new scholar to be welcomed, a baby's name to be added to the Cradle Roll are next dealt with. Numbers of different interests of this sort come up from time to time. Possibly before individual news is finished some pet or toy or bit of information will suggest another hymn to sing. Or the general concerns and interests of the talk will engender such a spirit of appreciation of good things that a prayer time will take place quite naturally, during which any child who wishes to may thank or speak his heart to the Father in Heaven. Often a child will unhesitatingly give voice to his own prayer when the matter is one of intimate concern to him. This does not necessarily exclude united prayer or the prayer silence which may mean so much even to those as young as Primary age. But prayer time must be opportune.

Now the plans for what we are to do next will be made. The young teachers and the leader of course have their part in this. They too are important members of the social group, and their suggestions for activity and for worship are often taken along with those of

the children. It is not necessary that every detail should be arranged now, but enough should be decided to put purpose and the spirit of happy endeavour into the atmosphere. It is this spirit of definite purpose that will largely prevent the disorder which an unready leader might easily find stealing into the Department. When children are busy they are not usually difficult.

Occasionally the leader will need to call to mind things which have been done during previous hours. It continually happens that in the absorption of new activities the children forget equally interesting and suitable old ones. Because they forget, it does not necessarily follow that they would no longer wish them.

Amongst important things to choose between will be the new story, the nature talk, an old story to be told over again, a time for expression of past stories, a bit of special expression or service; worth-while occupations which will not disturb other groups in the room. If sometimes children choose occupations which might involve considerable noise these should be taken away to class rooms outside. This would certainly be necessary where a group wished to dramatise.

As already suggested, the leader may often

be the one prepared to take the nature talk. If a large number of children choose the nature talk it may be wise that the remaining groups should go to the class rooms, leaving the unoccupied teachers to listen to the nature talk with the children. Sometimes the leader will take the story time herself in this way. Where there is no accommodation other than the main Department room the teachers will need to be prepared with both nature talk and story so that these can be taken in small groups. In this case some of the children at least will exchange teachers, since of course some teachers will have to take the nature subject and others the Bible story. In the average school such visiting is quite good for the child occasionally. But in cases where this is thought undesirable the children must be limited to one or other of the subjects: unless of course there are the two separate lesson periods during the afternoon; but this plan minimises the children's opportunity for choice or else complicates the organisation of activities unduly.

The children who choose to use the whole time for expression work or who want an old story over will need to be re-grouped under the care of either leader or young helpers. But

such re-grouping is not such a serious matter as the re-arrangement of the whole Department, and in any case it is wise to leave the children as much as possible to themselves while they are doing expression work; though someone should always be near at hand to see that all is well or to give any guidance for which they may ask. Care will need to be taken that during the group time story circles are well separated from work circles.

Quiet music should be played while children and teachers form and disband their circles, and unobtrusive musical signals given to show how time is progressing.

Expressional activities will often follow naturally the story or nature talk in the groups. Among the most suitable of these are free drawing, sand tray work, building, occasional modelling, and dramatising. When the story or talk is ended the music for taking expression is played and the children all leave their classes to choose the material they consider most suitable for their purpose. Expression materials will have been put ready before school on tables arranged at convenient places about the room. Each table should be well separated from the others, and each should offer every variety of material needed for the day, so that

crowding may be avoided and the children's selection made with despatch. After the choice has been made they will return to their groups and set to work, continuing until the musical call comes for the whole Department to return to its original state.

The children who choose to occupy themselves with expressional activities from the beginning of the group period will probably have been engaged in a number of different ways. Perhaps some will have recorded last week's story over again, or finished a bit of work begun last week. Another may have been making a special gift for some one who is ill, or caring for a pet, or undertaking some other bit of social work according to the demands of the immediate interest.

The group period may well last thirty minutes or longer. Children who are doing what they want to do are willing to stay with each other and their teachers for considerably more than an hour. It is our own convenience or the convenience of the authorities concerned with the premises which determine the time limits of the Primary Department hour.

After the children have reunited comes the time for talking over what has been done in the groups. Some may wish to tell a little

about the story they have heard ; others to show a specimen or a piece of work. The leader will sometimes collect the drawings the children have made and explanations and appreciations of these will be given. She will often at this time show a picture of the story. Her remarks about this picture added to those of the children who have heard the story will give the others a good idea of what the story was about. Equally now the nature pictures which have been used in nature groups or others put purposely on the walls to amplify the teaching may be noticed and commented upon by all. The children will very likely wish to sing again and a little conversation will soon set them seeking for a hymn appropriate to the thought of the day. If from time to time there are strong desires for some special hymn which is quite irrelevant to the occasion, it is probably just and right that they should sing it in addition to or instead of the other hymn or hymns. Before the hour is ended any bit of social concern belonging to the whole Department, such as what to do with the flowers, a message to be sent to an absent scholar or a plan for the coming week or for next Sunday will be considered. The hour may be closed in the way which the children feel is most suitable ; per-

haps by a prayer or with a hymn or a good-bye greeting. Here again the leader will be guided by the spirit of the Department.

It is easy to see that in the freedom of such an atmosphere the Primary child will have real opportunity to find God in his own way. Being his own choice the lesson and activities must necessarily be much more his own concern. Leaders will find opportunities for new and interesting activities opening up continually and will need to be ready to make adjustments for these. The following two suggestions are examples of this.

On a Sunday when the story of the man with the withered hand was the centre of the service the child in one Department entered to an entirely unarranged room. Everything was there, but chairs and tables were massed at the sides and expression materials were still in the cupboard. Beginning in a ring everyone looked at the room, discussed its state and talked of the work necessary from week to week in arranging it. The children in this way discovered something about the amount of effort behind each Sunday service. Then they went to work and put things ready. Later the story was told of the man who could not work because of his disabled hand. After this added

impression of the privilege of work the children decided that some of them should come early each week and use their strong hands and arms to help arrange the room.

Another Sunday, preceding the story of the healing of the blind man, the children clustered in groups around tables and looked at rather specially beautiful picture books for a time. This activity was used as a starting point to enable them to appreciate the gift of sight which the man in the story desired so greatly to possess.



## CHAPTER VI.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR SPECIAL SUNDAYS.

#### Flower or Cradle Sunday.

##### *Central Thought—*

"Green leaves and blossoms and sunny warm  
weather

And singing and loving, all come back together."

—S. T. Coleridge.

**F**LOWER or Cradle Sunday is a summer festival for the Primary children. It is a time of rejoicing because of the beauty of the earth, and also an occasion when the cradle babies may all be brought to Sunday School for the cradle exercises. Some schools make this Promotion Day as well.

The decorations of the room will consist mainly of flowers and branches of trees. Most of the flowers should be supplied by the children themselves, with perhaps the help of the teachers. A good idea would be to organise a

flower-gathering expedition for the day before, each teacher taking her little class into the lanes or the fields to gather wild flowers.

*Story Subject—*

How Jesus took the little ones in His arms and loved them.

*Nature Subject—*

Some of the flowers of the field.

*Typical Hymns—*

“ All the happy children, gladly join our song,  
Rising to the Father, in a chorus strong.  
Birds are brightly singing, leaves are opening  
wide,  
Flower bells are ringing forth on every side.

See the sky above us, spread so warm and blue;  
So God's love is reaching over me and you,  
Father dear, we thank Thee for long summer days,  
For the birds and flowers, for the grassy ways.

All the happy children thank Thee, Father dear  
For this day for children out of all the year  
We would still remember we are thine alone;  
He who made the summer made us every one.” (1)

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“ All the meadows are sweet with clover.” (2)

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“ The quiet Sabbath morn is here.” (3)

*Suitable Prayers—*

“ Father in heaven, bless Thy little children,  
Gathered before Thee on this happy day,  
For the morning sunshine, for the day we thank  
Thee;  
O Sun of love, shine in our hearts we pray.”

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“ We have so much to thank Thee for,  
Dear Father up in heaven,  
So very many pleasant things  
Thy love to us has given.  
We thank Thee for our happy homes  
With all their loving care,  
For father, mother and for all  
The little children there.

We thank Thee for the summer time  
With all its joyous play  
For birds and flowers and playmates dear  
That gladden every day.  
We thank Thee for the sunny hours  
And for the falling rain  
That helped the tiny seed to grow  
And gave the golden grain.” (4)

The last verse of this hymn may be said or sung  
as a benediction at the close of the service.

*Possible Reading* (from Psalm 118)—

“ This is the day which the Lord hath made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good;  
For his mercy endureth for ever.”

*Birthday Celebration—*

To-day the birthday child might be given as many flowers as he is years old.

*Cradle Enrolment—*

The mothers will be invited beforehand to bring their babies for a short time during the session. The mothers would appreciate a bunch of flowers and a cradle song might be sung for the babies.

After the service the flowers may be taken by teachers and children to the almshouses or to those who are ill.

**Harvest Sunday.***Central Thought—*

“ Back of the loaf is the snowy flour. And back  
of the flour the mill,  
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,  
and the sun and the Father's will.”

—*Maltbie Babcock.*

For to-day's service the room will be made beautiful with quantities of leaves and branches in various bright autumn shades as a back-

ground to the gifts of fruit, vegetables and flowers which the children will have planned beforehand to bring. A great sheaf of wheat or barley, with a bag of flour and a loaf of bread would add greatly to the suggestion of Harvest time.

*Story Subject—*

Harvest time in the land of Jesus.

*Nature Talk—*

Let the children talk about the different flowers, fruits and vegetables that have been brought to show the gladness of harvest time. Discuss the wonderful growth all through the summer time of the fruit and vegetables that have come from our gardens. Trace the growth from the seed to the blossom and the full grown vegetable, fruit or ear of corn. Let the children tell of the agencies that had most to do with their growth.

*Typical Hymns—*

"Great God, the world is full of Thee." (1)

"How strong and sweet my father's care." (2)

"Give thanks unto the Lord." (3)

"Praise my soul the King of Heaven." (4)

1. Child Songs.

2 and 4. "Songs for Little People."

3. "Songs of the Seasons," by Lucy G. Stock.

4. By Mary E. Plummer, Kindergarten Review (slightly rearranged).

*Suitable Prayers—*

“ For apples on the orchard boughs,  
For purple grapes and plums,  
For all the wealth of luscious fruit,  
That with the autumn comes;  
The nuts that drop from open burrs,  
On spreading chestnut trees.  
And all the treasures of the field,  
We thank Thee too, for these.  
We thank Thee for the sunny hours,  
And for the falling rain,  
That helped the tiny seed to grow,  
And give the golden grain.  
But most of all for Thy dear love,  
That watches night and day;  
And follows us and brings us back,  
Whene’er we go astray.”

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“ For all the good things the rich autumn brings,  
For all that the harvest can show,  
Most thankful we’ll be dear Father, to Thee,  
Whose power and love made them grow.”

*Possible Readings—*

*From Psalm 104.*

Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
O Lord my God, thou art very great.

\* \* \* \* \*

He sendeth forth springs into the valleys;  
They run among the mountains.  
They give drink to every beast of the field.

He watereth the mountains from his chambers;  
The earth is satisfied . . .  
He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,  
And herb for the service of man :  
That he may bring forth food out of the earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Lord, how manifold are thy works !  
In wisdom hast thou made them all ;  
The earth is full of thy riches.

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*From Mrs. Barbauld—*

“ Come, let us walk abroad ; let us tell of  
the works of God . . . Every plant produceth  
its like. An ear of corn will not grow from an  
acorn, nor will a grape-stone produce cherries ;  
but every one springeth from its proper seed.

Who preserveth them alive through the  
cold of winter, when the snow is on the ground,  
and the sharp frost bites on the plain ? Who  
saveth a small seed alive, and a little warmth  
in the bosom of the earth, and causeth them to  
spring up afresh, and sap to rise through the  
hard fibres ?

There is little need that I should tell you  
of God, for everything speaks of Him.”

*A musical illustration suitable for to-day.*

Ländliches Lied, Schumann’s “ Album  
for the Young,” No. 20.

**Easter Day.***Central Thought—*

“Breaks the joyful Easter dawn  
Clearer yet and stronger  
Winter from the earth has gone,  
Death shall be no longer.”

To-day the room is made beautiful with opening leaves and flowers. Wherever possible the children themselves should contribute to this decoration.

*Story Subject—*

“The boy who found the spring,” from “Stories Children Need,” by Carolyn Sherwin Bailey.

*Nature Subject—*

The new life awakening about us.

*Typical Hymns—*

“In the trees the birds are singing.” (1)

“The happy birds with joy will sing.” (2)

“Listen to our Easter song—God is Love.” (3)

*Suitable Prayers—*

“Hear us thank Thee kindest Friend,  
For the springtime Thou dost send;  
For the warm sunshine and rain;  
For the birds that sing again:  
For the sky so clear and blue:  
For this Easter Sunday too;  
Hear us thank Thee.” (4)

1, 2, 3, 4. Songs for Little People.



The children may be introduced to the following verse by simply talking to them about it as a thought some one had once; some one who had perhaps been out on a lovely spring day with the sun and the breezes. After telling it to them let all stay silent just as they are and think of it. Heads may be bowed if desired.

“ Sometimes I say an extra prayer,  
Besides the one for which I kneel;  
I sit and look up at the stars,  
And tell our Father how I feel.  
I do not ask for anything;  
I just feel happy through and through;  
I let my heart give thanks and sing  
Till all the world seems good and true.”

*Possible Reading—*

“ Lo, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
The time of the singing of birds is come,  
And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our  
land.”

*Birthday Celebration—*

To-day the birthday child might plant in a box of earth ready prepared for the occasion,

as many seeds as he is years old. This he will enjoy attending to from Sunday to Sunday until the plants have grown.

*Music—*

All the music to-day should be associated with the spring-time and Easter Day. The opening march or voluntary might, for example, be the music of the hymn, "Christ the Lord is risen to-day."

As solo music suggesting the spirit of springtime use a short selection from Scarlatti's Pastorale.

**Christmas Sunday.**

*Central Thought—*

"Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love came down at Christmas,  
Stars and angels gave the sign."

—*Christina Rossetti.*

The children will miss the most blessed joy of the Christmas festival if they may not share the pleasure of giving. The poorest child among us need not be shut out from this gladness if we manage things well. Children, leader, teachers, helpers, all will be delighted to make this one thing the centre of our Christmas thought—how to bring good cheer to those

around us who would otherwise have little or none.

It is necessary to plan for Christmas Sunday some weeks beforehand. The stories may be chosen to awaken sympathy for those who are needy, *e.g.*, such stories as the "Great Supper," "Good King Wenceslas," "How one Family Trimmed a Christmas Tree." The ideal story for the actual Christmas giving service seems to be the story of the Wise Men bringing their gifts to the Baby Jesus. The nature talk, too, may help. The children delight to tell of the beauties and joys of our winter visitors, Frost and Snow. But they know well the nip of Jack Frost, and a suggestive question or two is enough to set the imagination picturing what cold must mean to those who are hungry and ill-clad, and what deep snow must mean to the brave little birds.

Two or three Sundays before Christmas the plans to enjoy a Christmas tree are begun. Not a Christmas tree that Santa Claus has trimmed for us; but a tree straight and green and very strong and bare, except perhaps for a few little candles. How then shall the tree be trimmed? The children must decide. "We ourselves shall trim it." What for? "For those to whom Santa Claus cannot come this

Christmas." But what shall we trim it with? Now the suggestions are many and original, but those which mean some work on the part of the children are the ones that we should seize upon. Matters are explained to the children's mothers, and their sympathy enlisted; in some cases we may have to supply material. Then either at some special hour on a week-day, or during the Sunday hour paper dolls are cut out, woollen balls are wound, scrap-books are filled, beads are strung into necklaces, dolls' cradles and other furniture are made out of cardboard, boxes are made for sweets.

On the great day each worker brings the object of his own creation. What delight is seen in the faces of those who have produced something by individual skill and patience!

As the children enter with little arms laden, the Christmas decorations are seen for the first time; evergreens, holly and mistletoe hung beforehand by the willing hands of teachers and helpers. In the central place, straight and tall, but with branches broad and inviting, stands the sturdy fir tree. The children take their seats and the Christmas entrance music dies away into silence. Christmas greetings are given and returned. The glad time has begun.

And now the service proceeds with thankfulness for the glad day coming. Hymns full of the Christmas thought, such as Luther's "Away in a manger," "Once a little Baby Lay," are chosen to-day, and the prayers of the children are very sincere ones. There is a nature talk about the stars.

Perhaps after the story has been told and its pictures shown some friend who can sing well for children will tell the story over again in song.

As expression of the lesson story, all may imitate the Wise Men and bring our gifts to the Baby Jesus by offering them to those who are poor and needy. So the tree is filled. But the crowning glory has still to be added—the candles must be lighted. The touch of a taper here and there (each child takes his turn) sets them shining "like the Wise Men's star." The other lights in the room are dimmed and the tree is at its best. But in all this enjoyment we must not forget the purpose for which we have trimmed it, and so as we sit we sing again softly our Christmas hymns and picture once more that first glad Christmas Day long ago. Before the children go plans are made to take the presents to homes where little ones are waiting and hoping that Santa Claus may come.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STORY.

THE child craves for living pictures; he must be able to *see* examples of goodness whether in daily life or in fiction. He desires to enter into the experiences of other lives; lives something like his own, and yet glorified, inspiring; lives different from his own, fascinating because mysterious, and therefore wielding a powerful influence. What shall we give him to satisfy this need? Image-forming material out of which he can make his pictures and create his ideals. There can be little doubt that the "golden method" of story-telling is an ideal one for teaching the Bible to Primary Department children. The child revels in the well-chosen and well-told story. Not only does he lose himself in it as he hears it told, but he keeps it by him, assimilating and interpreting it from day to day.

Somehow many of us who are Sunday School teachers are afraid to trust a story to do its work, or perhaps we under-estimate the power of the child mind to make its own inferences. At the end of the story we find it necessary to do our own little bit of personal teaching. Provided our story is carefully chosen and skilfully told we need have no fear that the children will fail to grasp the moral truth contained in it.

Dr. Walter E. Hervey said—"One of the very first things a child knows is how to put his finger on the moral in the story; and he can feel it long before he knows it. But that is when he is left to himself. If you take the helm ten to one he'll know without feeling, which is the curse of us all. Better, if we must choose, that he feels without knowing than indulge in mere intellectual casuistry. In your childish haste to have a crop or to see what was going on underground, did you ever unearth the newly-planted row of peas? And was that row ever so green and straight and thick-standing as those that had been left alone? But the plants of love of God and moral taste are tenderer than these. They must be shined upon, warmed, and watered many days before they are ready to give account of themselves.

Love is a silent thing before it is outspoken. True feeling has few words, is not self-conscious, likes not to be asked questions. In its own good time it wells up and finds vent in deeds and even in words.

“ The deepest thing a teacher does is to form taste. But all taste grows slowly, and the taste for Godliness, for religion, is no exception. It is the finest and rarest of all tastes, and hence is the slowest and quietest of all in its development. But did you ever see in the hothouse, shall we say, of the Sunday School, seed sown, harvest reaped, and cakes taken from the oven within the limits of a single half hour? . . . .

“ There need be no fear that the children will not feel, and in time know, the meaning for them of their stories and pictures. And a wise teacher well knows the ways of helping them; by questioning not directly and by hiding the moral so near the surface that it will come forth of itself.”

A brief glimpse at the different steps to be followed in the story method of teaching young children will be worth while.

### **The Preparation of the Child's Interest.**

By this is meant the preparation of the



child's mind to receive the new material. By some means interests must be awakened through which the child can easily and naturally make connections with the fresh material.

This may be accomplished by the recalling of a previous story which for various reasons makes a good basis of departure, or through the informal chat concerning some familiar and vital experiences in the child's life. In either case it should not merely link the new with the old, but also stir a curiosity which only the climax of the story will satisfy. The remark which suggests that there is the possibility of a discovery is usually known as the "statement of aim." This should be made as informal and natural as possible.

A simple illustration of this may be seen in the story of David the shepherd. The children are asked to tell what they know about sheep, where they live, who cares for them, and how a good shepherd does this. Then comes the statement of aim, "to-day our story is to be about a shepherd boy. We shall find out how he looked after his sheep."

In the economy of teaching such direction of thought does away with all need for moral pointing. The truth comes to the child with

far greater force when he has discovered it for himself.

### **The Presentation of the Story.**

To be a delight and a help to the Primary child the story must be told simply, clearly and directly. While some of our Bible stories may be told almost exactly as they are written, a good many have to be rearranged, cut down or even filled out with details which are true to life. The scenes of the story must so follow one another in natural sequence, that there need be no going back to pick up forgotten incidents or a lost thread.

It is well in telling stories to the younger children to keep where we can do so advisably, one single point of view, preferably the hero's. This is usually possible to arrange in the Bible stories, though there are cases where some of the most thrilling parts of the story will have to be missed if the rule is too rigidly enforced.

Every good story has a climax, and for this all the earlier events of the story prepare. We may know how to find the climax of a story by asking ourselves at what point is the question answered which has been raised by the statement of aim? For example, in the story of the shepherd boy we hoped to hear how he

took care of his sheep. The climax will be reached, therefore, when we tell how David killed the lion and rescued the little lamb,—the most thrilling and conclusive illustration of this.

The conclusion of the story is a very important part of it. When we are preparing a story it is easy to slight the ending. We are apt to think that it will take care of itself. Perhaps the greatest danger is in the tendency to drag on indefinitely after the climax has been reached. Young children are nearly sure to lose interest while unimportant things are repeated, and side-issues are gathered up. The conclusion of the story should show concisely that the aim has been reached.

### **The Picture.**

Just when we should show a picture of the story to the children is a matter for careful thought. It is usually unwise with children of the Primary age to interrupt a story in order to show a picture. The children are making their own mental pictures through the teacher's words, and to interrupt this image-forming by introducing some one else's ideas will only cause confusion in the mind. Afterwards, when they have formed the whole picture for

themselves they will be interested to see how somebody else has thought of it, and they will likely be pleased to supplement their own ideas from the further suggestions.

In cases where the picture is an especially good one, and at the same time does not tell too much of the story, it may be well to put it upon the wall or blackboard before the school begins. The children will thus have time to become interested and curious about it before the lesson time arrives, and when the story is told may build their mental pictures about it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE NATURE MATERIAL.

**A** PRIMARY service which includes nature work possesses a fulness and a vitality which nothing else can give it. Interest is awakened without effort. Over the nature specimens the children become eager and talkative. The young teachers love the subject; through it they and the children very soon get upon common ground. No one knows *all* about the marvelous things of God's creation. Teacher and children must be learners together; they must search together, must together watch patiently for the wonderful developments that only time can bring. As a practical aid in creating that atmosphere of living interest so much to be desired in all school life, the nature work is indeed invaluable.

But there are still greater considerations in its value to the individual child.

*It leads him directly to knowledge of God, the Author of Life.*

The question, "Who made it?" is frequently upon the child's lips. He desires to get at the origin of things. He can feel a great force behind the mighty wind, the thunder-storm, the sun, the springing of flowers, the coming of all new life. Everywhere about the child there are miracles and mysteries. We cannot answer all his questions, and it is well that we cannot. To many a child's question there is only one reply, "I do not know." The teacher who gives this reply may teach a far greater thing than the one who tries to explain. It should be our aim to bring him into contact with the great wonders of life and growth, so that he may think and search out truth for himself.

"Isn't it wonderful when you think,  
How the creeping grasses grow  
High on the rocky mountains' brink,  
And the valleys down below?  
A common thing is a grass blade small,  
Crushed by the feet that pass;  
But all the dwarfs and giants tall,  
Working till doomsday's shadows fall,  
Can't make a blade of grass!

Isn't it wonderful when you think,  
How a little seed asleep,  
Out of the earth new life will drink,  
And carefully upward creep?  
A little seed is a simple thing,  
The germ of a flower or seed;  
But all life's workmen labouring,  
With all the help that each can bring,  
Never could make a seed!

Isn't it wonderful when you think,  
How the wild bird sings his song?  
Weaving melodies link by link,  
The whole sweet summer long.  
Commonplace is a bird alway,  
Everywhere seen and heard;  
But all the engines of earth, I say,  
Working on till the judgment day,  
Never could make a bird! "

Through such teaching we can lead the child to *feel* God.

From nature we borrow constantly and she yields to us lavishly. From hill and forest we get the material to build our homes; from the ground we get coal to warm us; from the sheep wool to clothe us; from the cow milk; fruit from bush and vine and tree; wheat from the field. All these things show wise provision for our daily needs.

*It forms a background for knowledge for many Bible stories.*

It is interesting to notice the number of Bible stories which have a nature setting, or are in some way connected with nature. All stories of shepherd life, of the sea, and the wind, and storm, of fisher life; all stories of the field, of the sower and the seed, of trees and vineyard and garden, call for acquaintance with nature to be thoroughly understood and appreciated. What a difference to the understanding of the New Testament alone must nature talks on these subjects make to the children who live far away from hill and field and seaside.

*It forms interests which will abide all through life.*

Some of us can remember the time when we woke up to a real interest in the world of living things. Hodge says—"The value of such an interest is inestimable; it may add a sparkle to the eye, elasticity to the step, and a glow to every heart-beat, and be the most efficient safeguard against idleness and waste of time, evil and temptation of every sort. To find an interest in some worthy nature love is to discover the fountain of youth." And then



he says—"What is there for the whole child—hands, feet, eyes, ears, and brain, mind and soul—to work with actively, except phenomena of nature, responses to which have constituted the education of living forms through all time?"

*It develops appreciation of life and beauty.*

It is an inspiring thing to show the children a bunch of beautiful flowers. How their eyes dance at sight of the lovely colours and forms! We do not need to talk a great deal to them about the beauties of nature. We do enough, usually, when we provide opportunity for them to come into real contact with its wonders. If the child is given a chance to see the baby leaves of the bud or seed gradually unfolding, he will soon discover the beauty of them for himself. The most unaesthetic child will see the beauty of a flower which he himself has grown from seed. If the children are taught that the flowers are given long stems for a purpose, they will not be likely to cripple them for life and for all future usefulness by picking them off by the heads. Tasteful arrangement of flowers and leaves, appreciative handling, consideration shown for their life—these things will enhance their beauty in the children's eyes.

Most children do not have to be taught to overcome aversion to a worm or a caterpillar. Dislike of such things generally comes through seeing their elders recoil from them. By getting the children well acquainted with the lowly creatures we can do much to prevent such unbrotherly feelings. In cases where the children are repelled, it will be necessary to point out the reason for the bodily form: the adaptation of structure to the mode of life, and the fitness and therefore the beauty of such arrangement. Very soon the children will come to see beauty in those creatures that seem the meanest.

*It develops consideration for the life and feelings of others.*

We all know of instances of children's cruelty to animals. Often this cruelty is the result of ignorance. They do not realise that the animal has feelings. Often it is the result of affection. They love the furry kitten so desperately that they must squeeze him half to death to express it. Sometimes, too, a child will torment a creature for the sake of seeing it jump or wriggle. But with young children it is not usually cruelty for cruelty's sake, though if they are not taught to understand it may develop into that.

There are a number of creatures that we can bring to Sunday School for children to be kind to. The timid rabbit visiting us must not be startled; we must stroke it gently if we stroke it at all. It might be hungry: we must feed it with the kind of food that it likes. The caterpillar must be placed upon a cabbage leaf or a leafy twig. The butterfly that emerges from its cocoon in our box must be let out of the window when it is strong enough to fly. The tadpoles developed in our aquarium should be taken to the pond. If a dove is brought to school it should be a tame one, and should have a roomy and comfortable cage.

There can be no need for the children to take the flower or the seed to pieces to learn its secret. They will learn all they need to know at this age through the perfect specimen, or else through watching development during growth. Plants of various kinds, seeds and bulbs which require regular attention, may be set growing. Sometimes we can give the children buds and seeds to take home and care for.

Experience shows that they do care for these. "To rear a flower," someone says, "is an ideally ethical thing, and may elevate the moral and aesthetic tone of a household." If

flowers and leaves are brought to school, they should never be left out of water be they ever such poor specimens, or crumpled up by hot little hands.

There is no easier way to teach consideration for the feelings and needs of other people than through this care for the lower forms of life. The emotions of love and tenderness awakened through the irresistible appeal made by these will undoubtedly go out to human beings.

*It suggests many desirable qualities of character.*

Care for, and devotion to others is seen in plant and animal life. All nature lives for its offspring. The flower lays down its petals that the fruit may grow and ripen. The tree gives up its leaves that they may form a protective covering for the seeds which have fallen to the ground. The mother bird sits with patience on her nest until all her babies are hatched, and then with the father bird tends them devotedly until they are ready to care for themselves. Helpfulness is constantly seen. The rain and the sun help the seeds to grow. Jack Frost paints the leaves with gorgeous colours and covers the window-pane with beautiful designs.

The bee helps the flower and the flower helps the bee; the workers in the hive help one another. The ant, as well as the bee, gives us marvellous examples of industry. The dove suggests gentleness, the spider perseverance, the squirrel thrift, the dog faithfulness. The children behold these wise folk, and are impressed and consciously or unconsciously they take example from them.

It is plain enough that a big portion of the lesson material for the Primary Department should be from nature.

“ He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small,  
For the dear God who loveth us  
He made and loveth all.”

### **Objective Material.**

Nature work can of course be carried on more easily in the country than in city schools. The city teacher does certainly have to take some little trouble in order to do really good work; but in the end it is worth while. It is very important to provide plenty of live specimens, which the children can watch and touch; this is especially so in cases where the children do not come into contact much with nature outside the school. Wordsworth complains,

“ Natural history is taught in infant schools by pictures stuck up against walls, and such-like mummary; a moment’s notice of a redbreast pecking at a winter’s hearth is worth it all.”

The town teacher can do a great deal to provide herself with specimens. She can grow certain seeds in coconut fibre, in sawdust, or on damp blotting paper; seeds such as beans, wheat, corn and sycamore. She can grow acorns and bulbs of different kinds in water or in pots of earth. She can have window-boxes for a variety of other plants and flowers. It is even possible in some cases to secure a little bit of ground belonging to the church building and to convert it into a garden. If any ground-space is available this is worth trying. Schools in some town neighbourhoods would find it quite possible to make a success of nesting boxes. These should be made as nearly like the bird’s natural place of nesting as possible. It is not hard to get tree buds, and these will develop well in water. Then there are seasonable flowers to be found in the flower shops through three parts of the year, and foreign ones in the fourth. It is not difficult to get shells, slugs, worms, chickens, doves, vegetables. There are wonderful shops in some towns where water-snails, goldfish, dormice,

hedgehogs, and rabbits can be bought or hired. And we should remember that not far from most towns there are parks and ponds and streams. A Saturday jaunt to visit these can occasionally be arranged. It is possible in some schools to form a committee of young teachers to be responsible for getting the nature specimens for Sunday.

Pictures, too, will help greatly.

“ We are made so that we love,  
First when we see them painted,  
Things we have passed,  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.”

And there are certain things which we cannot show to the children otherwise. The landscape talks must be given through pictures. The same may hold good of first talks on pond and hedge life. Often a picture of animals in the natural habitat such as squirrels or dormice will be needed to supplement a talk on the live animals.

### **Choice of the Nature Subject Material.**

There are two considerations which the Primary leader needs to keep before her in her choice of nature material week by week. One is to show the year in its seasons. This is not

only convenient but important, because in the march of the seasons and the fulness of each the children can see the wonderful plan of God. The other, is to choose matter that bears more or less directly upon the Bible story of the day. For example, a talk on the mother bird's care for her babies (especially when nesting by the water side) would go well with the story of Moses in the bulrushes; a talk on bird's journeys, with the story of the flight into Egypt; perfumes and how they are obtained for the story of Mary anointing Jesus. Care must be taken, however, not to force correlation where there really is no true connection between the central thoughts of the two subjects. The Primary section list of the British Graded Lesson Courses frequently suggests a nature subject as story material. On such an occasion it is by no means always necessary to have a second nature subject.

### **The Nature Talk.**

What is meant by a nature talk? The expression may be misleading. It may easily imply that the teacher should take a specimen or a picture and tell the children what she knows or thinks they ought to know about it. As a matter of fact, here again it is the children



who ought to do most of the work. Froebel says—"Do not tell the child in words more than he could find out himself without your words. For it is, of course, easier to hear the answer from another, perhaps only to half-hear and understand it, than it is to seek and discover it for himself. To find out one-fourth of the answer by his own effort is of more value and importance to the child than it is to half-hear and half-understand it by words of another."

The method should really be that of directed observation. While the child is busy over his nature specimen we may put questions and lead him to think and work out for himself the wonderful problems it holds. Why, for example, has the chestnut bud a sticky coat? Why do many of the early spring flowers have slender stalks? Why do the creepers climb high in the hedge? When we have thoroughly awakened curiosity and thought, then we can supply new and interesting facts to satisfy curiosity and to *supplement* those things that the child has found out for himself.

### **Expression of the Nature Teaching.**

The nature talk is the foundation of the nature work done in the Department, but it

is only the foundation. If nature study is to be a life-interest to the children, it must be made thoroughly practical. Hodge says—“ Unless the active and creative side is emphasised, the constant danger is that the study will fall to the level of mere fancy work which may interest the teacher but fail to appeal to a large part of the class, especially the boys.”

As has been already suggested there are many living animals and plants which we can bring for children to minister to and watch. But besides this we may encourage them to notice things outside school which they will show or tell about in news time. These may begin with weather observations. Changes in the sky and the direction of the wind by day may be noted. The birds seen in the neighbourhood may be reported, and any particulars about nests built, eggs laid, young birds fledged. The children love to have their news noted down, and they learn much about the migrant habits of birds by recording the time of the appearance and disappearance of different ones.

They may also be encouraged to bring flowers to beautify the class room and to send away after school to friends, young or old, who are ill. If they cannot bring flowers, they can

often bring pretty grasses or leaves. Some schools in districts where it is easy to find flowers, arrange during the summer to have one special kind of flower brought each Sunday. In this way the children get to know the different flowers well and to know the different sorts of one species. They are also led to notice when the different flowers are most plentiful.

They may be encouraged, too, to make collections of various sorts. Different kinds of seeds and nuts may be collected, which afterwards can be set to grow; different kinds of leaves, grasses, shells; twigs with sleeping buds, different sorts of cloth made from wool, and many others.

Most schools keep Harvest Sunday, and this can be made a great day in the Primary Department. Children who have gardens will take great pleasure in growing something—a little hill of potatoes, for instance, perhaps cabbage or beans—on purpose to bring to the Harvest festival. This is the day of all days when the children are led to realise God's great bounty and to give thanks for it, not only by praise and prayer, but by giving to those who for some reason or other are less fortunate than they.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE TRAINING CLASS.

**W**E have seen that the Primary Department Training Class must necessarily play a most important part in the general plan of teacher production for the church. The Primary leader's opportunity, therefore, is a very great one. It needs real sympathy, great patience and considerable tact to lead successfully a group of both girls and youths between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years. But the great appeal and need of childhood are the leader's allies, and make gloriously hopeful an undertaking that would otherwise often appear impossible.

These years mark the time when the boy and girl begin truly to realise themselves. They take pleasure in making very manifest their individuality. But they are also introspective now and often reticent and sensitive. It is a time when they may be most easily influenced for good or for bad.

To many it is a time of doubts and questionings. The mind is eagerly seeking the solution of problems of every sort. Little can be more fascinating to the adolescent mind than studies in life. It is often a time of intense love of nature. The eyes of the youth and maiden can now be opened to see God's creation in a new and wonderful light. A great interest in music, and literature shows itself. We can all remember what poetry meant to us at this age. It is a time of great enthusiasms, a time of hero-worship. Devotion to some person, some hero or heroine, whether in life, history or fiction, may carry a young soul far. Girls and boys now like to be in each other's society; a new phase of social life begins.

These years also mark a period of great religious enthusiasm. There is inclination to attend church, to pray. There are new feelings towards God and Christ. There is often the desire to go upon some mission or to engage in some great service. This is the spring-time of life, the time of great ambitions. There are energy and desire to do things in abundance and to do things which call for responsibility.

So often our churches give them no real chance to express themselves. Customs and traditions are apt to prevent them doing the

things that they would and could do well. We are apt to think that because they are immature they are not good enough for religious work. And yet among the little children there is waiting the opportunity to realise their ideals in active service; and that in the company of comrades of their own age. Here they work for love; here they learn indirectly from the beauty of child nature. Here they may be taught the meaning and wonder of life, and through it the greatness and love of God. Here, too, they may learn God's word in a new way. They must interpret it not only for themselves, but also for the children. They learn not selfishly but so that they may give again. Many times pleasure must be set aside for the sake of their classes. It is a sacrifice of love.

It has been found that this work with the children possesses a mighty power to lead those who are undecided to take a definite stand as church members. There are many cases on record of young teachers who have joined the church *after* becoming teachers in the Primary Department. It is true that we should not choose our Primary teachers indiscriminately. And it is right that teachers should come to the Primary Department as helpers first, so that there may be a certain time of testing before

any great responsibility is given. But, after all, is it not true that work and the Evangel must go hand in hand?

### **The Training Class Curriculum.**

Every graded school needs to have before it a policy of teacher education throughout the grades, and a very definite scheme of work for each grade. Just what each scheme of work will include will depend on what has gone before. The Primary Training Class syllabus, for example, will be determined by the study course which the teachers have undertaken while they were scholars in the Senior Department. The day has gone when we may feel it justifiable to take up the whole of training class time with the study of the children's lesson for Sunday. Supplementary studies should correlate with this when possible, but supplementary studies there should be. The Primary teachers will in the ordinary way be about three years in the grade. During these three years the ground work in Bible study, child study and method must be done.

In the matter of Bible study it is not too much to expect them to get a pretty clear idea of the Bible story and its place in the history of the world. This should include as well as

an outline of Old Testament history, some knowledge of the period between the Testaments, a clear idea of the events of the life of Jesus and a brief view of the history of Christianity after the days of Jesus. It is reasonable that the young teachers should have at least some clear perspective of the history of their religion if they are to get a sense of right values for themselves and for the children.

Added to this there should be opportunity for some special presentation of the life of Jesus. Opportunities suitable will be found for this, since the stories of His life are used frequently for the Primary child, and the work for teachers and children can thus be correlated. The studies of Christ's life should be taken in such a way that the young people will see what the ideals of Jesus mean to the social world of to-day, and what His teachings mean to them individually and as students and teachers of childhood.

Considerable time will need to be given to the subjects of organisation, method and child nature. Certain phases of these subjects will be undertaken quite naturally in the discussions resulting from the experiences of the Sunday hours. Such discussions will be of the truest value when they arise out of the concerns



of the moment. But in order to make sure that no important phase is missed a syllabus of child study and method in addition to the rest should be worked out by the leader.

The consideration of the subject or subjects for the children's lesson of the coming Sunday will be first a matter of searching for background, Biblical, extra-Biblical or nature; secondly, the arrangement of material for presentation to the different groups. (Sometimes it will be necessary for all teachers to prepare for both story and nature talk). Thirdly, a discussion of possibilities for the Sunday service in the light of this subject material, for example, the showing of pictures, correlation of thought in the service, adjustments for possible expressional activities and so forth.

### *Training Class Method.*

The method of conducting the Training Class will vary according to the demands of the particular type, or proficiency of the young people who are its members. Where special talks are needed or united discussions are desirable the one group circle will of course be best. But it will help young teachers to become more independent workers and keener

students if smaller group study circles are organised from time to time to overtake at least part of the necessary work. Quite a good arrangement is a division into three groups. Sometimes all groups will simply take on different portions of background study. For example in the case of a Bible lesson, one group may take on the particular bit of world or race history which lies behind the incident. Another will study the data immediately concerned with the setting of the story, and the third will attempt to arrange the material for presentation to the children. With this method any necessary books, maps, pictures, or other material must of course be at the disposal of the groups.

Let us use as illustration the story of Elisha and the widow with two sons. The first group may look up the historical and political situation in Israel at the time of Elisha's life. The literature for this will need to offer, in addition to the historical side, information concerning the historical and literary value of the Elisha stories. Such books as Hastings's Bible Dictionary, Charles Foster Kent's "Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah," the Century Bible, "Kings," will be useful in this case. Group two will need Bible references and literature with maps and pictures

which will light up the incident. They will need a clear conception of Elisha and his position, information regarding the schools of the prophets, the geographical situation of the places Elisha visited, some explanation in the light of the customs of the times, of the difficult situation in which the widow found herself. The miraculous character of Elisha's action would be discussed, but probably not pronounced upon until later after the first group has reported to the rest concerning the historical value of this Elisha literature. The third group will need Bibles, any good pictures that may be stimulating to the imagination, and a memorandum of the steps generally used in building up a lesson.

Since the teachers are inexperienced and the time for study seldom exceeds an hour, some guidance is desirable in this group work. This can be secured by a short list of questions and references prepared by the leader for each section. During the group time the leader ought always to be free to answer any questions asked by members of the group.

Each group will need to choose one member to record findings. When the time allotted for the study is over the one large group will be re-formed so that each section may have the

benefit of what the rest have discovered. Points which puzzled one group will now be cleared up by the others or by the leader. The suggestions of the third group for story arrangement will be amplified or adjusted if necessary.

Other variations of the group work, or still more individual effort may be introduced as seems wise, and with other than Bible subjects.

### **The Criticism Class.**

The criticism class affords the leader a splendid opportunity of testing the efficiency of the work of each young teacher and for giving individual help. The teachers look forward to a criticism class with very great interest. One of the number is chosen to teach the lesson for the following Sunday to a class of little children brought in for the purpose, while the others watch and listen and note down strong or weak points. After the lesson the children are dismissed and the teachers are given an opportunity of expressing their opinions concerning the work done. Under the leader's direction good and weak points are discussed and the lesson is in this way prepared for telling on the following Sunday. The criticism class promotes a systematic study of the lesson material and method. Every point

of the lesson, to the smallest detail, must be carefully thought out by the one who is to teach it. Notes of the lesson should be written out beforehand and handed to the leader. Any needful suggestions are then made by her and the notes returned.

The following suggestions as to points to be considered in criticising a lesson may be found helpful to the leader of the training class.

*The Lesson Material.*

1. Its value—

Intrinsic.

Relative to the interest of the children.

2. The amount—

Whether sufficient to reach the aim assigned.

Whether within the range of the grasp of the children.

*The Lesson Method.*

1. Its suitability to the mental state of the children.

2. The mental activity of the class.

3. The formal steps followed—

Preparation : its adequacy, style.

Presentation : its sequence, narration and language.

Expression : its suitability to the material, relation to the aim, whether truly the children's own.

### *Discipline.*

Whether attention was the result of interest or definite discipline. The effect on the class of the manner and voice of the teacher.

There are other ways besides the criticism lesson of testing a young teacher's efficiency. An examination of the children's completed expression of the lesson, especially the free drawings, will reveal a good deal about the impressions which those in the different classes have received from their teachers.

Occasionally it is well for the leader to tell the story to the teachers just as she would tell it to the children, or better still allow them to hear her tell it to the whole Department on a Sunday.

### *Time of Meeting.*

Whenever possible the training class should meet on a week-evening. In view of the number of concerns which the training class involves, the time required for it each week cannot well be put at less than an hour and a quarter. This would of course be over and

above the 15 minutes or so spent in the united opening service with the other Department training classes. This united opening is now common in well-organised schools. It is used partly as a devotional time and partly for the discussion of business relating to the activities of the whole body of teachers. The preliminary business of the Primary Department training class will be overtaken in the sectional room. This business will usually consist of the calling of the class roll, the arrangements of class groups for Sunday as far as it is possible to make them, the appointment of certain teachers to be present early at school on Sunday to prepare the Departmental room, reports from teachers of the results of visitation to the homes of scholars who have been absent.

### **The Social Side of the Training Class.**

The social side of the Training Class is a very important one. It is of great advantage to the leader to know the homes of the young teachers. She can enlist the co-operation of parents in making the training class a success, in promoting regularity in attendance and punctuality, in encouraging the doing of any home work and the visiting of the children.

The room in which the training class is

held should be open for informal social intercourse some time before and after the sessions each week. Social evenings and outings should be held not only with Primary teachers alone, but with the other teachers of the school. The leader can do much to win the friendship and confidence of the young people at such times.

### **Conditions of Membership.**

The Training Class leader will find it necessary to have very definite conditions of membership laid down for the teachers and helpers, and these conditions should be clearly presented to them before they join the training class. They should be pledged to attend regularly both training class and Sunday School, and should understand plainly that the teacher who is absent from the training class cannot be allowed to take his or her group on the following Sunday, but must give it up to a helper for that day. An agreement somewhat on the lines suggested below has been found of great value in many Departments in helping young folk to understand that the undertaking is a serious one. They appreciate a business-like arrangement of this sort, and are usually willing to abide by it. Leaders will of course need to



keep strictly to any such agreement. If a teacher is obliged to be absent often from training class and Sunday School he should be asked to resign in favour of one of the many young people who are willing to become helpers. To allow him to remain would not be fair either to the teachers who attend regularly or to the children in his class.

### **Agreement.**

In becoming a teacher in the ——— Primary Department, I undertake to set apart and consider as a first engagement each Friday evening and Sunday afternoon. If circumstances such as serious illness should prevent my attendance at either of these times I will, whenever possible, send word beforehand to the Primary Leader.

I will also undertake my share of the responsibilities and duties which fall to the Primary Department teacher.

Some of the teacher's duties, which require special note, are as follows:—

To be present at Sunday School on ordinary Sundays at 2.45 p.m. and on those days when appointed as special helper at 2.15 p.m.

To visit absent scholars.

To read the Bible narrative before coming to Training Class.

To write an occasional paper, or set of lesson notes.

The leader will welcome any suggestions from teachers towards the scheme of Training Class supplementary studies.

If upon occasion, for some very special reason, a number of teachers wish to be absent from the Training Class, the Primary Department leader will be glad to try and arrange with the rest of the teachers to hold the class at another hour during the week.

Signed..... Teacher.

..... Leader.

## CHAPTER X.

### HOME CO-OPERATION.

**H**OME co-operation may be secured for the Primary Department by several means, but largely by personal visitation.

There are three different visiting agencies in the Primary Department. The leader of the department, the class teacher and the Cradle Roll organiser. Through these the home can be kept in close touch with the school. The Primary Leader should herself visit every home and become acquainted with the parents. At such times she can do much to secure the co-operation of the mother. A word with her will clear up any misconceptions that those in the home may have received concerning methods used in the school. She can explain just why it is so necessary to have the children arrive punctually, why it is desirable to have the wraps removed during the session, or why

it is wise to add an overall to the child's Sunday attire. She can give personally a cordial invitation to the parents to visit the school and see all that is going on.

The young teachers visit their own particular scholars. They should look up absentees and deliver special notices. Their visits are fairly frequent, and therefore they have much opportunity to become acquainted in the homes.

The Cradle Roll organiser comes into contact with most of the homes. Her work is extremely valuable in this connection; the mothers are particularly grateful for interest taken in their babies. Surely we have here a very wide-open door into the mother's heart.

It is most valuable to have a parents' social once a year or even oftener. This should be at least partly an informal affair where parents can become acquainted with the leader, teachers and one another. Part of the evening might be taken up by an explanation of Primary Department methods, or by special talk on some phase of child nature. The parents invariably appreciate such a gathering as this.

A circular letter from the leader to the parents may upon occasion be very helpful. For example, in a certain school some time ago the offerings were exceedingly small. The

following letter was sent to the homes, and the result was most satisfactory :—

“ Dear Friend,

We are anxious to promote a true spirit of giving among the children of our Primary Department, and we are venturing therefore to ask you to help us in this concern by providing the children from time to time, as they may request it, with the opportunity for earning any gifts which they may wish to contribute. We would like the children to bring to school only gifts in kind or money which are truly their own.

We shall esteem it a favour if we may have the benefit of your co-operation in this matter.

On behalf of the officers and teachers,

.....

Primary Department Leader.

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